

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

[23] JAYSON SIERRA-VÁZQUEZ,

Defendant.

CRIMINAL: 13-695 (GAG)

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
RE: RULE 11 PROCEEDINGS (PLEA OF GUILTY)**

I. Procedural Background

On September 23, 2013, a grand jury returned an indictment against [23] Jayson Sierra-Vázquez (hereinafter referred to as “defendant”) and other persons. ECF No. 3. Defendant has agreed to plead guilty to count fifty-three of the indictment. Count fifty-three charges that from in or about July 2010, until the date of the return of this indictment, in the District of Puerto Rico and within the jurisdiction of this court, the defendant knowingly and intentionally combined, conspired, confederated and agreed with others, both known and unknown to the grand jury, to commit an offense against the United States, that is: to possess with intent to distribute one (1) kilogram or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of heroin, a Schedule I, Controlled Substance; five (5) kilograms or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of cocaine, a Schedule II Controlled Substance; and a detectable amount of marijuana, a Schedule I, Controlled Substance, all in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 846 and 841(a)(1).

II. Consent to Proceed Before a Magistrate Judge

On February 8, 2016, while assisted by counsel the defendant, by consent, appeared before the undersigned in order to change his previous not guilty plea to a plea of guilty as to count fifty-three of the indictment. In open court the defendant was questioned as to the purpose of the hearing being held

and was advised of: (a) the nature and purpose of the hearing; (b) the fact that all inquiries were to be conducted under oath and that it was expected that his answers would be truthful; (c) the potential consequences of lying under oath (such as a perjury charge); and (d) his right to have the change of plea proceedings presided by a district judge instead of a magistrate judge. The defendant was also explained the differences between the appointment and functions of the two. The defendant consented to proceed before the undersigned magistrate judge.

III. Proceedings Under Rule 11, Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure

A. Rule 11(c)(1) Requirements

Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure governs the acceptance of guilty pleas to federal criminal violations. Pursuant to Rule 11, in order for a plea of guilty to constitute a valid waiver of the defendant's right to trial, guilty pleas must be knowing and voluntary: "Rule 11 was intended to ensure that a defendant who pleads guilty does so with an 'understanding of the nature of the charge and consequences of his plea.'" United States v. Cotal-Crespo, 47 F.3d 1, 4 (1st Cir. 1995) (quoting McCarthy v. United States, 394 U.S. 459, 467 (1969)). [There are three core concerns in these proceedings]: 1) absence of coercion; 2) understanding of the charges; and 3) knowledge of the consequences of the guilty plea. United States v. Cotal-Crespo, 47 F.3d at 4 (citing United States v. Allard, 926 F.2d 1237, 1244-45 (1st Cir. 1991)). United States v. Hernández-Wilson, 186 F.3d 1, 5 (1st Cir. 1999).

B. Admonishment of Constitutional Rights

To assure defendant's understanding and awareness of his rights, defendant was advised of his right:

1. To remain silent at trial and be presumed innocent, since it is the government who has the burden of proving his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.
2. To testify or not to testify at trial, and that no adverse inference could be made in relation to his decision not to testify.
3. To a speedy trial before a district judge and a jury, at which he would be entitled to see and cross examine the government witnesses, present evidence on his behalf, and challenge the government's evidence.
4. To have a unanimous verdict rendered by a jury of twelve persons which would have to be convinced of defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt by means of admissible evidence.
5. To use the subpoena power of the court to compel the attendance of witnesses.

1 Upon listening to the defendant's responses, observing his demeanor and his speaking with his
2 attorney, that to the best of counsel's belief defendant had fully understood his rights, it is determined
3 that defendant is aware of his constitutional rights.

4 **C. Consequences of Pleading Guilty**

5 Upon advising defendant of his constitutional rights, he was further advised of the consequences
6 of pleading guilty. Specifically, defendant was advised that by pleading guilty and upon having his
7 guilty plea accepted by the court, he will be giving up the above rights and will be convicted solely on
8 his statement that he is guilty.

9 Furthermore, the defendant was admonished of the fact that by pleading guilty he would not be
10 allowed later on to withdraw his plea because he eventually might disagree with the sentence imposed,
11 and that if he violates the conditions of supervised release, that privilege could be revoked and he could
12 be required to serve an additional term of imprisonment. He was also explained that parole has been
13 abolished.

14 In response to further questioning, defendant was explained and he understood that if convicted
15 on count fifty-three he will face the following penalties: a minimum term of imprisonment of ten (10)
16 years and a possible maximum term of life imprisonment, a fine not to exceed ten million dollars
17 (\$10,000,000), and a term of supervised release of not less than five (5) years, but not more than life.
18 However, if the court accepts the defendant's guilty plea and if the court accepts the amount of narcotics
19 stipulated by the parties in the plea agreement, that is at least five hundred (500) grams but not more than
20 two (2) kilograms of cocaine, the penalties for the offense shall be the following: a term of imprisonment
21 of at least five (5) years and not more than forty (40) years, a fine not to exceed five (5) million dollars
22 and a term of supervised release of at least four (4) years, but not more than life.

23 The defendant was also explained what the supervised release term means. Defendant was also
24 made aware that the court must impose a mandatory penalty assessment of one hundred dollars (\$100)
25 per offense pursuant Title 18, United States Code, Section 3013(a).

26 The defendant was advised that the ultimate sentence was a matter solely for the court to decide
27 in its discretion and that, even if the maximum imprisonment term and fine were to be imposed upon
28 him, he later could not withdraw his guilty plea for that reason alone. The defendant understood this.

1 **D. Plea Agreement¹**

2 The parties have entered into a written plea agreement that, upon being signed by the
3 government, defense attorney and defendant, was filed and made part of the record. Defendant was
4 clearly warned and recognized having understood that:

- 5 1. The plea agreement is not binding upon the sentencing court.
- 6 2. The plea agreement is an agreement between the defendant, defense counsel and the attorney
7 for the government which is presented as a recommendation to the court in regards to the applicable
8 sentencing adjustments and guidelines, which are advisory.
- 9 3. The agreement provides a sentencing recommendation and/or anticipated sentencing
10 guideline computation, that can be either accepted or rejected by the sentencing court.
- 11 4. In spite of the plea agreement and any sentencing recommendation contained therein, the
12 sentencing court retains full discretion to reject such plea agreement and impose any sentence up to the
13 maximum possible penalty prescribed by statute.

14 Defendant acknowledged having understood these explanations and all the terms and conditions
15 of the plea agreement.

16 **E. Government's Evidence (Basis in Fact)**

17 The government presented a proffer of its evidence consistent with the version of facts of the plea
18 agreement with which the defendant concurred. Accordingly, it is determined that there is a basis in fact
19 and evidence to establish all the elements of the offense charged.

20 **F. Voluntariness**

21 The defendant accepted that no threats had been made to induce him to plead guilty and that he
22 did not feel pressured to plead guilty.

23 **G. Waiver of Appeal**

24 The defendant was explained, and he understood, that if the court accepts the plea agreement and
25 sentences him according to its terms, conditions and recommendations, he will be surrendering his right
26 to appeal the sentence and judgment in this case.

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28 ¹ "Plea agreement" refers to the agreement and its supplement.

1 **IV. Conclusion**

2 The defendant, by consent, has appeared before me pursuant to Rule 11, Federal Rules of
3 Criminal Procedure, has entered a plea of guilty as to count fifty-three of the indictment. After
4 cautioning and examining the defendant under oath and in open court, concerning each of the subject
5 matters mentioned in Rule 11, as described in the preceding sections, I find that defendant is competent
6 to enter this guilty plea, is aware of the nature of the offense charged and the maximum statutory
7 penalties that the same carries, understands that the charge is supported by the government's evidence,
8 has admitted to every element of the offense charged, and has done so in an intelligent and voluntary
9 manner with full knowledge of the consequences of his guilty plea. Therefore, I recommend that the
10 court accept the guilty plea of the defendant and that the defendant be adjudged guilty as to count fifty-
11 three of the indictment.

12 Any objections to this report and recommendation must be specific and must be filed with the
13 Clerk of Court within fourteen (14) days of its receipt. Failure to timely file specific objections to the
14 report and recommendation is a waiver of the right to review by the district court. United States v.
15 Valencia-Copete, 792 F.2d 4 (1st Cir. 1986).

16 SO RECOMMENDED.

17 At San Juan, Puerto Rico, this 25th day of February, 2016.

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19 s/Marcos E. López
20 U.S. MAGISTRATE JUDGE
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